

# Minutes

## HTP Regional Reference Group – Meeting

Monday, 3 February 2025

10:00am – 12 noon

Cessnock City Council and Online – MS Teams

Chaired by: Bob Pynsent – Independent Chair

Online	In person	Apology	Name	Represents
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bob Pynsent (BP)	Independent Chair
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sue Moore (SM)	Mayor Singleton Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Watton (DW)	Mayor Cessnock City Council
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adam Shultz (AS)	Lake Macquarie City Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	John Sullivan (JS)	Singleton community
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Phillip O'Neill (PO)	Cessnock community
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diane Crosdale (DC)	Lake Macquarie community
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Craig Anderson (CA)	Regional Environment
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Samantha Martin-Williams (SMW)	Regional Business
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nathan Towney (NT)	Regional Aboriginal
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Katie Brassil (KB)	RRG Secretariat
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alana Kosklin (AK)	RRG Secretariat
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jennifer Ross (JR)	RRG Secretariat

### Visitors

	NAME	POSITION
Online	Carolyn McCallig	HTP Environment and Planning Lead
In person	Darren Clarke	NSW EnergyCo Director Regional Coordination
In person	Sam Harding	NSW EnergyCo Manager Regional Coordination
In person	Emily Davies O'Sullivan	NSW EnergyCo Manager Regional Coordination
Online	Tim Willat	HTP Technical & Property Project Manager – Priority Projects

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## Declarations of interest

Nil to declare.

## Agenda item discussion and actions

### Item 1. Welcome and Acknowledgement

The Chair delivered an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed members and visitors in attendance, both in person and virtually to the February meeting of the RRG.

The Mayor of Cessnock, Daniel Watton also extended a welcome to the Cessnock LGA.

### Item 2. RRG Chair and Regional Environment Representative Report on 9 December 2024 meeting

- Discussed the HTP alignment focussing on camps/worker accommodation.
- Acknowledged the importance of community engagement and talking with impacted stakeholders is high on the agenda.

Discussion by members covered:

- CA - ensuring the Hunter is well presented in the development of the community benefits and Hunter First strategies .
- SMW – importance of looping the Chair into the communications and environment strategy.

### Item 3. Update on EIS progress; Construction compounds; Laydown areas; Construction access roads

*Presentation by Carolyn McCallig, HTP Planning and Environment Lead*

Carolyn provided details and updates on the following studies:

- Biodiversity and the biodiversity offset strategy
- Aboriginal heritage
- Bushfire risk assessment
- Agricultural land use
- Traffic and transport
- Status of other studies

*Presentation slides attached.*

Discussion by members covered:

- CA- asked where the biodiversity offset package is at in its development
- CM – clarified the offset package and DC explained the process for developing the strategy which involves a Regulation currently in draft.

- DC – advised that more input into the strategy is needed.
- CA – agreed it was important for the RRG to have input.
- PO – asked where the funding for the offset strategy come from?
- CM – advised that EnergyCo is accountable for the Conditions of Approval (CoA) and therefore accountable for the delivery of the offset strategy. The Network Operator will manage the Design and Construction (D&C) contractor after the CoA are known.
- DW – asked if there was a low risk for bushfires?
- CM- advised that around 500kV lines the risk was low.
- PO – referred to statements on social media about uncertainty once the D&C contractor is appointed.
- CM – advised compliance with the CoA is the responsibility of EnergyCo and this flows on to the D&C contractor.
- DC – advised that Transport Management Plans are submitted by the D&C contractor and are reviewed by Planning.
- DW – advised that Wollombi Road Stage 2 is now being funded, and asked how EnergyCo can work with this for its access needs?
- CM – stated that EnergyCo would need to work through and follow up.
- AS – asked what the impacts of HTP access will be on Freemans Drive and Mandalong Road which is marked for improvement by State and Federal Governments. Timeframes for these works are being sought.
- CM- agreed to talk about the Mandalong Road upgrade offline and consult around the best strategy to coordinate.
- BP – has there been any consultation with the Hunter Wine Association about road impacts?
- AK – confirmed there has been consultation and the Engagement team will be meeting with them again in a few weeks.

#### **Item 4. Design Process and Access Agreements**

*Presentation by Tim Willet; HTP Technical and Property Project Manager – Priority Projects*

Tim provided details on:

- A Reference Design to support property acquisition has been developed.
- Upon award of the design and construction contracts, a process known as detailed design will commence and will be undertaken by the Construction Contractor.
- During the acquisition process, specific property access requirements and requirements on use will be captured (where applicable).

*Presentation slides attached.*

Discussion by members covered:

- CA – asked if landowners have right of veto around land access.
- TW – no right of veto but EnergyCo will aim for mutual agreements,
- PO – asked about concerns raised via social media about changes that could be made by the D&C contractor.
- TW – advised that the key action will be to develop key messages around this.

**Item 5. RRG Scope / Terms of Reference**

*Presentation by Darren Clarke – NSW Energy Co Director, Regional Coordination*

Darren presented on the opportunity to refine the RRG:

- Increased number of projects within the Hunter region.
- Aim is to expand the scope of the current RRG to cover the Hunter region.
- Tabled that the RRG would expand to include a community representative one each Muswellbrook and Newcastle.
- Agreed that in the expanded RRG all discussions that impact Lake Macquarie would be addressed first to allow the Mayor to then leave the conversation once it was no longer relevant.

*Presentation slides attached.*

Discussion by members covered:

- JS – asked what planning coordination is happening with all the renewable projects in the Singleton area.
- DC – advised that there is unlikely to be an access scheme but there is an interface between renewable energy proponents and EnergyCo. Communication around this is a challenge.
- PO – asked if there is an Environmental Impact Assessment for the HCC REZ.
- DC – advised that Ausgrid as the NO for the HCC REZ will be undertaking a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) and not an EIS.
- JS – are there any cumulative impacts?
- DC – advised there are cumulative impacts but there are commonalities that are being factored in.
- SMW – is EnergyCo talking to Newcastle Airport?
- DC – now aware of any engagement with the Newcastle Airport but will feed this back.
- BP – consensus on the change to the RRG would be discussed at the next meeting on 5 May when the Terms of Reference would be tabled.
- DC – advised Council Commissioning payments would be released soon.

**Item 6. General Business**

- BP and SMW attended an Industry Meeting held by EnergyCo last Thursday (30 January).
- Meeting was positive and well-attended by a group of suppliers keen to supply the steel for the towers to be made in the Hunter.
- BP – feedback was that it was a well-structured meeting and provided genuine engagement.
- BP – will be discussing local business at the next meeting.
- BP – biodiversity cannot wait until the next meeting and there is a need to have input before the draft EIS is prepared.

Action	Responsible	Status
Confirm the process for drafting the biodiversity offset strategy Regulation.	Darren Clarke / Secretariat	ongoing
Question on notice: how will the costs be managed for the offset strategy, who pays and what are the timeframes? What does Transgrid own and manage?	Darren Clarke / Secretariat	ongoing
How will EnergyCo work with the upgrade of Wollombi Road Stage 2 when it comes to access and transport for the HTP?	Carolyn McCallig / Secretariat	ongoing
Discuss Mandalong Road Upgrade with Lake Macquarie Council.	Carolyn McCallig / Secretariat	ongoing
Key messages about the role of the D&C contractor to be developed	Secretariat	ongoing

#### Upcoming meetings

#### Meeting Schedule for 2025:

5 May – TBC

4 August – TBC

3 November – TBC

Meetings to be held on the first Monday of the month from 10am – 12noon.

The Chair thanked members for their contribution to the discussions and wished everyone a safe and enjoyable holiday period.

**There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:47 am.**